

Good Morning Everybody. My name is Rob Simmons, and I am proud to be a pro-labor Republican from the great state of Connecticut. I oppose privatizing Social Security. And I voted against CAFTA because it sends American jobs overseas.

I am proud to be a Vietnam Veteran and to be the longest serving military officer in Congress today with 37 years, 7 months and 24 days of service. Are there any veterans here today? Could the veterans in the audience please stand. Thank you for your service. I am proud to have served in the CIA for ten years as an operations officer, with five years engaged in espionage overseas.

But I was not proud when I completed 20 years of federal service and came home to Connecticut. We were once called the "Arsenal of the Nation" with more defense jobs per capita than any other state in the United States, but I saw high quality American manufacturing jobs heading overseas. Whether it was the Teamsters at Sikorsky, or the Machinists at Pratt Whitney, or the Boilermakers and the UAW at Electric Boat, I saw some of the best defense workers in America being laid off. Speaking frankly, I was ticked off!!

It makes me angry to see my tax dollars go to defense contracts with foreign countries when those American tax dollars should be supporting the defense industrial base right here in America! It makes me angry to see offsets to foreign countries where our tax dollars are invested in research and development and manufacturing facilities abroad that will compete with us and take our jobs.

I believe in America. I believe in the right to organize. I believe in fair trade. But American jobs come first! And I cannot believe some of the horror stories I am seeing first-hand in Washington, DC.

The Department of Defense bought \$29 million worth of weapons from Poly Technologies, a Chinese state-owned company that's under indictment for smuggling weapons into California for Iraqis to use. Poly Technologies is delivering 2,369 light and heavy machine guns, 14,653 AK-47s and 72 million rounds of ammunition to Iraq, courtesy of the US taxpayer.

Where was China when our men and women liberated Iraq? They were working with Saddam Hussein to improve his air defense systems, against our troops. They opposed the liberation of Iraq and have done nothing to help spread freedom and democracy in that part of the world. And now the Chinese are rewarded with this US government contract, while US gun manufacturers like Colt Industries in Connecticut are laying off workers.

It gets worse; I represent Groton, Connecticut, the submarine capital of the world. The Marine Draftsmen's Association, which is part of the UAW, designs the best submarines in the world; and the Boilermakers help make them. But while our Navy is cutting back on ship production, and workers are being laid off, the Chinese are generating hard dollars to build their Navy into one the biggest in the world.

Let's look at the numbers. By 2015, the Chinese Navy will be larger than ours, with twice as many submarines. And yet we are giving them hard dollars in unfair trade deals and the purchase of their small arms weapons at the expense of American workers and American jobs!

Recently your President, Ron Ault, wrote an article called "The China Syndrome" where he correctly pointed out that China is exploiting our technology and engaging in major trade practices to build a military force to threaten our Navy and recover Taiwan. What are we doing to counter this treat? We are cutting back! In 2005 we are down to 4 new ships while China is working on at least 12. At the same time, the DoD is investing several million dollars on a new personnel system that will disrupt our civilian workforce and undermine the right to organize. I oppose the NSPS and would like to see those dollars going into something useful like more ships!

Here's another story. In October of 2003, I visited Iraq. Our troops said they needed armor for

their HUMVEEs. Just a little rolled homogeneous alloy 3/8ths of an inch thick would do the job. The Secretary of the Army wrote me in November of 2003 and said this project was his “top priority.”

Let's fast forward to last week when I was told that there are still 5,200 HUMVEEs that are not armored, and even more trucks are unarmored. So what is the problem? Well, it turns out that there is only one American company left that produces this armor, in Coltsville, PA, and even with full production it cannot meet the demand. So we are buying from Canada and Sweden.

As a veteran, I am angry that our country cannot produce enough armor plate to protect our men and women in uniform. I am shocked that our industrial base has been so degraded. What happened to those foundries and those jobs over the last 15 years? Outsourced! Gone!

But it gets worse. For over one half century, every President since Eisenhower has ridden safely and securely in American helicopters built by Teamsters at Sikorsky Aircraft in Stratford, CT. The latest Sikorsky version was based the S-92 which won the Collier award as the safest aircraft in America in 2002. And yet in a head to head competition for the next generation of presidential helicopters, it was decided to award the contract to an Italian-owned firm, Augusta-Westland.

A couple days after Sikorsky lost the contract, a Pentagon bureaucrat sat in front of me and told me with a straight face that the All-American bird lost because the Italian helicopter had more cabin space! Having been shot down in a helicopter, I can tell you that extra cup-holders and leg space for staff is the last thing you think about when the propellers stop and you're crashing to the earth. So it made me a little nervous when I found out that the model they are building has been grounded in Canada and the UK because of serious cracks.

Now we learn that the European company has already told us the delivery date will be a year later than we thought. The President is going to be late for his appointments – if he gets there at all in one piece.

It could get a lot worse. The Pentagon will soon announce the winner of the air tanker competition between Boeing and Airbus. This is the same Airbus that gets billions in government subsidies so it can undercut American firms. Airbus is run by the same governments that said the company wouldn't consider an American-made engine. Is anyone in Acquisitions listening to what they are saying?

Free trade is a joke. And we're the last ones to get it! The bureaucrats who give away our billion-dollar contracts are either naïve or stupid. Either way, they need to change the way they do business.

At the time of the award, the Secretary of the Navy told me to my face that Sikorsky could not meet the aggressive schedule to field these helicopters. There was too much risk in their projections. And yet six months later, Augusta-Westland and their American partner has come back to the Armed Services Committee and asked for a waiver on the schedule. They want to field eight of their helicopters without full testing. So we are being asked to transport the American President in a foreign helicopter that is not fully tested for safety or security. This is baloney! If Augusta-Westland can't meet the requirements of the contract, we should cancel the contract and give the jobs to Sikorsky.

We must preserve our industrial base. We must protect our defense manufacturing. We must ensure that our men and women have the best American weapons and equipment, designed and built by Americans for Americans.

As a pro-labor Republican, I support Davis-Bacon. On September 8, the president suspended Davis-Bacon for reconstruction projects along the Gulf Coast. The result was predictable. Workers with few skills, no certification and, according to reports, illegal aliens showed up to do

the work, displacing skilled workers from the region. On September 27, I joined 36 Republican colleagues to ask that the president repeal his executive order. Last week I met with Chief of Staff Andrew Card on the subject. And late yesterday, the Administration agreed to our demand. The people of the Gulf Coast deserve quality work from trained, experienced workers. This is what Davis-Bacon delivers!

Brothers and sisters, the problems we face are not just about partisan politics. It is not just about Republicans and Democrats. It is not about Clinton or Bush. The problems I describe are problems about America. And if we do not get serious about "Buy America," there will be nothing left in America to buy.

I carry a little book in my pocket, and it contains the Constitution of the United States, and it begins with three words: WE THE PEOPLE. Well, this is your Constitution, and this is your government, and this is your Capitol and up on The Hill is your Congress. America is selling itself overseas. We are destroying our industrial base. We are investing in our competitors. We are outsourcing critical national defense manufacturing which weakens our national security.

American tax dollars must go to American defense jobs, to produce goods and services for American service men and women. Anything less is unpatriotic.

Thank you, God Bless you and God Bless America.